



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE STATE'S ATTORNEY FOR HOWARD COUNTY

Contact: Yolanda Vazquez
410-313-2108

yvazquez@howardcountymd.gov

For Immediate Release:

Howard County Man Pleads Guilty to Child Pornography Charges

Howard County, MD (November 19, 2019) – Robert Awtrey, age 71, of Ellicott City, pleaded guilty to possession of child pornography before Howard County Circuit Court Administrative Judge William V. Tucker today. Sentencing is scheduled for February 28, 2020 in Howard County Circuit Court.

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children received a tip on January 2, 2019 that pornographic images were being downloaded by a computer belonging to Robert Awtrey of Ellicott City, MD. A search warrant was executed on his house on May 29, 2019 by Howard County Police. Mr. Awtrey was present at the time. In a recorded statement, Mr. Awtrey admitted that he uses the internet to view pornographic images of adult women, but does not search for minors or children. During a thorough search of Awtrey's home, police discovered three USB drives in a safe in the basement. Forensic preview showed three images, one of which was a toddler, naked from the waist down, with her genitals exposed and a penis against it. Awtrey told police he was surprised those images were on his USB drives and stated that someone must have put them there because he only looks at adult women.

Prosecutors are recommending a sentence of five years, suspending all but six months. As part of the plea agreement, Awtrey must also register as a Tier 1 sex offender, forfeit any electronics involved in the case and have no unsupervised contact with minors. He has already completed a psycho-sexual evaluation.

In response to the plea agreement, State's Attorney Rich Gibson commented, "Sadly, the children in these photos are being exploited and Mr. Awtrey's viewing of these photos contributes to the abuse of children for sexual gratification. Our office is pleased with the guilty plea and hopes Mr. Awtrey recognizes how his behavior has a profound impact on these vulnerable victims."

Assistant State's Attorney Natasha Blount prosecuted the case.

###